

**WILLIAMSBURG PLANNING COMMISSION
MINUTES
COMPREHENSIVE PLAN IMPLEMENTATION WORK SESSION #4
Wednesday, July 25, 2007**

A work session of the Williamsburg Planning Commission was held on Wednesday, July 25, 2007, at 4:00 p.m., in Conference Room 3A, Williamsburg Municipal Building, 401 Lafayette Street.

ATTENDANCE AND CALL TO ORDER

Present were Commissioners Pons, McBeth, Hertzler, Driscoll, Joseph and Kafes. Also present were Planning Director Nester, Deputy Planning Director Murphy, Zoning Administrator Rhodes and Assistant City Attorney Workman.

OPEN FORUM

No one spoke at the open forum.

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN IMPLEMENTATION – SITE PLAN AND LANDSCAPE REQUIREMENTS (PCR #07-027)

Zoning Administrator Rhodes discussed the landscape standards in the Zoning Ordinance, reviewing them by topic.

Open Space Requirements

Mr. Rhodes presented a table of the open space requirements for the various zoning districts, and suggested that the Commission consider increasing the open space requirement for the B-3 District from 15% to 20%, as recommended by the 1998 LDR report.

Transitional Screening, Greenbelt, and Resource Protection Area Buffers

Mr. Rhodes reviewed the Zoning Ordinance requirements for these buffers, and suggested that the Transitional Screening and Resource Protection Area buffers not be considered as part of the landscaped open space required by the Zoning Ordinance. He said that the Greenbelt buffer area should be counted because it is at the front of the property. He reviewed the site plans for six businesses that met the required landscape percentage both with and without considering the Transitional Screening and Resource Protection Area buffers.

Parking Lot Landscaping – Landscape Area Along Public Streets

Mr. Rhodes noted that the LDR study suggested increasing the landscape area along streets from 15 feet to 20 feet, but questioned whether we would be better off keeping the existing setback but requiring additional landscaping. Mrs. McBeth raised the issue of maintenance of existing landscaping within this area, and cited Red Lobster, which

had removed mature landscaping when management changed. Mrs. Murphy said that we need to look at the requirements in the Zoning Ordinance about modification and replacement of existing landscaping.

Parking Lot Landscaping – Interior Parking Lot Islands

Mr. Rhodes discussed the issue of spacing of landscape islands in parking lots, noting that the Zoning Ordinance has no specific standards. He said LDR recommended an island every 20 spaces, but the previous Zoning Ordinance had a requirement of every eight to 10 spaces. He showed pictures of examples of parking lots with various spacings of landscape islands, pointing out that there is a noticeable difference between a 20 space and a 10 space spacing. Mr. Pons said that we need to make sure that any changes are not being too restrictive.

Parking Lot Landscaping – Building Perimeter Plantings

Mr. Rhodes noted that no perimeter landscaping is required by the Zoning Ordinance. LDR recommends 10 feet on the front and side of buildings, which may be too much – a buffer of five to six feet should be sufficient. Mr. Pons said that a percentage of the building perimeter, not the entirety, should be considered for perimeter plantings. Mr. Nester pointed out differences between buildings in the Center City area and along Corridors. Mr. Hertzler and Mr. Kafes said that perimeter plantings are often not the best solution. Mr. Rhodes said that perimeter planting requirements may not be appropriate for shopping centers, and there was additional discussion about this issue. Mr. Driscoll discussed the relationship between building design and landscaping. Mr. Kafes said there is a problem when owners can remove mature landscaping and replant. Mr. Hertzler pointed out the need for proper planting beds (both size and material) for trees in parking lots.

Recommended Plant Material

Mr. Rhodes reviewed the Zoning Ordinance requirements for plant materials and sizes, showing pictures of Chesapeake Bank on Lafayette Street with the required 2 inch caliper trees, and Walgreens with 3 inch caliper trees. Mr. Hertzler said that smaller caliper trees will outgrow larger ones over time, and will be healthier. He said we need to pay attention to how the trees are planted, especially the type of soil for the planting areas. He said he would rather use smaller shrub sizes, which would open up a much larger palette of materials.

Mr. Joseph departs.

Mr. Rhodes also pointed out that the LDR study recommended adopting a list of acceptable plant materials. Mrs. Murphy said that this issue was discussed earlier today by the Beautification Advisory Committee, and that the Committee felt that it would be better to have a list of prohibited plant materials. Mr. Pons raised concerns about irrigation of landscape areas, in relationship to water conservation. Mr. Nester

said that issue may be dealt with in other sections of the City Code rather than in the Zoning Ordinance.

Landscape Issues Summary

Mr. Kafes led a discussion to the items covered to see if a consensus existed on the points discussed by Mr. Rhodes.

- Open Space Requirements – it was agreed that the open space requirement for the B-3 District should be raised from 15% to 20%.
- Transitional Screening and Resource Protection Area buffers – it was agreed that transitional screening and RPA buffers should not be counted toward the required open space, but that a waiver provision for this requirement should be added.
- Landscape Area along Public Streets – it was agreed that the existing 15 foot requirement was sufficient, but that better requirements for landscaping within this area should be provided.
- Interior Parking Lot Islands – a consensus was not reached on this issue. It was noted that there is a difference between parking in the front and the rear of buildings, as well as between interior parking and parking spaces adjacent to the 15 foot landscape buffer beside a public street.
- Rear Landscape Buffer – a consensus was not reached on whether or not the requirement should be the existing 5 feet or 10 feet. It was noted that this buffer may not be needed in certain situations.

Mr. Driscoll departs.

- Building Perimeter Plantings – a consensus was not reached on this issue.
- Recommended Plant Material – a consensus was not reached on this issue. Concerns were expressed about allowing flexibility in the standards rather than a specific list.

Mr. Nester said that staff was not ready to proceed to draft a final ordinance, since there are so many unresolved issues. He said that this needs to be further discussed at another work session, and suggested the possibility of the end of August. He said that members would be contacted and a specific date set.

OPEN FORUM

No one spoke at the open forum.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:15 p.m.

Douglas Pons, Chairman
Williamsburg Planning Commission